

CITY OF NEWARK, NJ'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with George Branch, August 28, 1996

Q: Center here in the City of Newark. I have arrived in downtown Newark at City Council meeting today, August 28, 1996, with Councilman George Branch. Good morning, Mr. Branch.

Branch: Good morning, Ms. Pauline Blount. How you doing?

Q: Okay. It's a pleasure meeting with you today. And we're very interested in your life, living in the City of Newark. So could you give me your full name?

Branch: My name is George Branch.

Q: Okay. And your approximate age.

Branch: My age now is 67.

Q: Okay. Your place of birth. Were you born in Newark?

Branch: I was born in North Carolina. Seaboard, North Carolina. 1928. October the tenth. The tenth day in the tenth month.

Q: And your educational background. Did you graduate from North Carolina or you graduated from Newark, New Jersey?

Branch: No I graduated from here. And I only spent four years of my education in North Carolina and I moved to Newark in 1941.

Q: And you are married?

Branch: I'm married.

Q: Okay. What is your wife's name?

Branch: My wife's name is Joyce M. Branch.

Q: Okay. Are there any children? You have any children?

Branch: I have a daughter and a son. And my wife, she has two boys.

Q: What are your children's names?

Branch: My son's name is George E. Johnson and my daughter name is Jackie Slappy.

Q: Jackie Slappy?

Branch: Yes.

Q: What are the ages? What's you son's age?

Branch: My daughter, she's 37 and my son, he's 28.

Q: What about your parents? What's your father's name and your mother's name?

Branch: My father's name was Tom Branch. And my mother was named Bella Ann Branch.

Q: Okay. And their place of birth.

Branch: North Carolina.

Q: All right. What about their age? How old is your father, or how old was he?

Branch: My father died in 1941, no 1939, he was at that time, 1939, he was about 37 years of age.

Q: Okay. So he died at a young age.

Branch: Yes.

Q: What was his occupation?

Branch: My father was a farmer, sharecropper, and he also was a barber by profession.

Q: Oh great. What about your mother?

Branch: My mother, she was like the, well, the household. She was head of the house. You know, in terms of husband and wife, you know, running the house, maintaining, cooking, preparing for the family. And then when she got a chance, she would go work in the field along with my father and myself.

Q: Good. You have brothers and sisters?

Branch: I have seven, seven is in the family. It was four boys and three girls.

Q: Okay. Your oldest brother.

Branch: I'm the oldest brother.

Q: Okay. And the next one after you?

Branch: The one after me, his name was Robert Branch. That's my, and the one next to me.

Q: And they lived where?

Branch: They lived in Newark.

Q: Okay. When you came to Newark from North Carolina, when you decided to leave home, could you give me a reason as to why you wanted to leave?

Branch: Well, the reason wasn't so much why I wanted to leave, is that we were young and my aunt, her name was Mazur Branch, and she was in, she was living in Manhattan, in New York. And she used to visit back and forth. And, you know, in the south was a rural area where you work on the farm, where labor was cheap, and we worked in the cotton field, we pulled peanuts, corn, picked cotton. We did all of those things that, you know, for a living. And labor was cheap. I worked for fifty cents a day.

Q: Oh my goodness.

Branch: Back in those days and time.

Q: And that was what year?

Branch: Oh, that was back in 19 around 35, 36, you know, in those areas, around those times. And I used to work in the field. And my aunt used to visit us back and forth. And she talked about the living was good in the northern states and it was good. Labor was better and you could get a job fast and you didn't have to work in the field. The hot sun, you know. You didn't have to bend over all day long picking cotton, trying to make a living, and doing all those other things. She was telling me how great it was here. You know, she lived in New York. So when I came to New York first. I moved into New York with three of us. And there were my sister Billie May and

cripple dan they call him, his name was Sam. And we was the three singers. We was the Branch Trio, was three of us And when we got here, in Manhattan with my aunt, we met a good friend, a janitor, who was of a building, and we got to know him. And we was telling him about that we were singing. My mother and the rest of the family was left in the south, and we were the first three to arrive here in New York, in Manhattan. And he used to take us around to sing And the various groups they would donate clothes, give us money. But all we looked country. Oh great for us, you know.

And so, we didn't have anybody really to manage us, and so when my mother moved to New York, I mean my mother moved to Newark, we moved from New York to Brooklyn, and lived in Brooklyn with my aunt And his name was Marlene. And we moved from Brooklyn to Newark in 1941. And then the rest of my family finally arrived in Newark. And we lived on Barker Street, 28 Barker Street. And those days and times the area was economical stable, jobs was plentiful, the community was a growing community, playground was filled with kids in the afternoon, nobody was robbing, knocking people in the head. So it was just a joy in the community. Because everybody knew each other. You could walk out your house and leave your door open. Nobody would bother to break in your house or steal from you, what have you.

Q: Oh great.

Branch: But we lived there when the time was good. And I seen a lot of changes. But those days and time, we were a real good time. I used to carry ice for a living, and I used to carry wood for a living. I used to shine shoes to make a living. You know, it just was a great life.

Q: What a great life.

Branch: That's all we knew.

Q: Right. Did anyone try to stop you when you came to New York and actually moved into Newark? Was there any, you know, obstacles in your way? To say, well, don't go to Newark.

Branch: No. There wasn't that. It's just that my mother came and we just, she brought us, wanted us to come back and be a family, you know. To be with her. So there was no obstacles at all. Where the other, you know, in reference to use coming here and my aunt, she was satisfied. You know, because they didn't have enough room, you know, we was living together in the basement, you know, over there in New York. You know, where my aunt lived down in the basement. The janitor of the building was a very good friend of hers. So we lived in the basement down there.

Q: What was the journey like coming from the south?

Branch: Well, this was a, it was kind of exciting and then it was frightening. Because number one, I didn't know what I was coming to. I mean, the books that we read, the pictures that we saw, you know, the big city was the place to live.

Q: Place to live.

Branch: Right. We always dreamed, I always dreamed after looking at all that I would be there one day. When I used to see, in the books, they used to show where the cop was a very big help in the community. The fireman he was always there to assist and help. And the policeman was always helping the kids across the street. It wasn't like we had crossing guards like we have today, security guards. The policeman was the part.

Q: Like a part of the community.

Branch: Yeah. And everybody respected the policemen. The young people cause we was excited to see the uniform, the gun, and what have you.

Q: The whole bit.

Branch: It was, you know, we respect that in those days and times. So it was, but it was kind of frightening because I didn't know what I was coming into. I didn't know what I saw, but I wanted to see it.

Q: Right. How did you get to Newark, did you, I meant to New York, coming to north, did you travel by train or bus?

Branch: We traveled by train. My mother was able to save up the little money that we made, you know, on the farm. And my aunt, I think she contributed to it. And at that time traveling was not very expensive by train. That was a cheaper way for us to come at that time. And we came by train.

Q: Okay. Was it clean? Was the train clean?

Branch: The train was clean. The porters was very nice and courtesy on there. Most all of them black in those days and time. And we was, they was very polite to you, you know. They help you with your luggage and your bag and getting on the train, you know.

Q: Did you have food? Did they have food available on the train?

Branch: They had food available, but we packed out little food from down home. We packed it in a shoe box. We ate chicken, ham, biscuits, you know. And all that wrapped up in a shoe box. So, you know, you ate when you got ready. So you didn't have to go order anything and pay for it. If you wanted a drink of soda and those things like that was not on the train. It was not as it is today.

Q: Would you consider the trains being segregated in any way?

Branch: The trains was segregated in those days and times. There were certain sections, you

know, for blacks and then for whites. The whites and the blacks are not sitting together on the train at all. Called a black section, you know. All black folks. You know, we had all our boxes and bags piled up, you know, all over the place, you know.

Q: But in all, you were treated very well by the people that worked for, you know, the trains. The conductors and all. You had no problem with that.

Branch: No. Because we was kids. And it's not like if I was an adult, you know, may have looked at me different. But somehow folks always had a lot of respect for the kids in those days and time.

Q: In your leaving the south, did you anticipate returning back, or you came to stay on a permanent basis when you left?

Branch: You know, that had never crossed my mind, you know, turning back or anything. But after, as a young person, I grew up in a city life. I was surrounded much activity all over the place where you didn't have any south. So you become accustomed to your new environment. I could run downstairs, run out the door, and run across the street to get a soda or some candy or some cookies. And in the south you couldn't do that. You had miles to go before you get to a store. And it wasn't easy to walk there when you was out on the plantation or the farm it's a way away from the town. We used to go shopping once a week. My father was in, after twelve o'clock, he'd hitch up the mule to the wagon and what have you. We'd go into town and shop that day for the whole week. And that's what we would do. We would be glad to go to little town. Because we saw what the little town looked like. And you'd go in the general store, you know, and order what they want. And many times they got stuff on time, and they'd settle up at the end of the year and what have you. And most time, when you settle up, I don't care how much you made, you ain't made nothing. White men always say, white men always say you owe for this, you owe for that. You mean, I haven't even got that. But if you didn't have education and you couldn't see regular run and records of what you got and what you have you, okay, you were just out of the winning.

And it was the same identical thing here in the stores with blacks who migrated from the urban, migrated from the south to the urban cities. And the stores, they're most of the Jews and Italians who had the stores and what have you. And if you was unaware of their kind of system, even though jobs were plentiful --

Q: Right.

Branch: So what do you do, you shop at this particular store. Okay? You got to know who the person is. And if you, they say, well, can I pay you at the end of the month? You know, they give you what you want.

Q: So there was no problem with credit?

Branch: No problem with credit. The problem was when you got it, you paid more at the end then what you actually should have paid when you bought the stuff.

Q: Okay.

Branch: Because they put it on the books, and you never kept no books.

Q: So you never knew what your balance, your total was.

Branch: That's right. Right. Okay. Now one guy asked me that, and the guys on the Star Ledger when they heard me say something like that, that the Jews are discriminating against blacks in some instance. And that was a true life. That was the real truth in the urban cities that they would do this to you. In particular if you came and you didn't have no knowledge of how to keep records and what have you.

Q: They would keep em for you.

Branch: Right. And you trusted a white man more than he trusted you. Only difference was that he kept the books.

Q: And you didn't.

Branch: You didn't keep no books.

Q: How was the food? Was it the kind of food that you were accustomed to in the south?

Branch: Well, yes, cause they had, they had black eyed peas, they had collards, carrots, they had the yams, they had white potatoes, they had the pig knuckles, the pig feet.

Q: So they knew what you wanted?

Branch: They catered to what black folks were used to having from the south. Otherwise, you couldn't go in and sell Italian food to black folks just like that, or Jewish food. So they knew what to cater to wo when you came into the store they had exactly what you want. White back people used to get to cook their black eyed peas or put their collards in. They had all that.

Q: They had everything.

Branch: Strickling. Meat, stuff like that, you know. They knew all. They had the pig ears, the pig tails, they had ribs, they had liver, and kidney. They had all that stuff. Same that came from down south, came here, you know. Slaughter houses right here in Secaucus. Mother used to work out there. Killing the hogs to sell them to the market.

Q: Sell them to the market. Did you, or can you recall anyone that you helped move to Newark after you had gotten settled here?

Branch: No. I didn't. No I did not help anybody to move to Newark. Because as a young person, you know, you grow up and you become very involved in your community. And we lost contact with a lot of my family. And in 1951 or 1949 I started to go back down south. And I went back to visit to all of my relatives everywhere I could go to find them. And I was only like a young man then about twenty-one, about nineteen or twenty-one years. So I was struggling trying to find out where my family was on my mother's side and my father's side. So I kept hearing from different ones who came north as I met them. And they would give me an address of the persons that we knew when I was there. And so I got a chance to go back to visit everybody that I knew when I was there.

Q: Okay. Do you remember if there were any black store owners in the community that you and your family shopped in?

Branch: Where, in North Carolina?

Q: No., Here in Newark.

Branch: Here in Newark. There was a very, very few. Most of the blacks owned like the beauty shop, the barber shops, the pool room, restaurants.

Q: And were they kind?

Branch: Oh yeah. You take a person like Amelia Stewart. One of the few blacks who made a tremendous name for herself as a restaurant entrepreneur in our community. She began a household name. She was right there on Prince Street right where Reverent Perry Simmon's church is. Right in there by the middle of that block. Where she used have like the black eyed peas, corn bread, and all the other normal things that black would have. What they liked, they ate. Everybody go there. You could get a bowl of beans for fifteen cents, twenty-five cents. And corn bread. And she grew from there, you know, from there. And her made a household name.

Amelia Stewart Restaurant. And we all went there to eat because we got the best of food. You get baked sweet potatoes, I mean, you know, just melt in your mouth.

Q: Melt in your mouth, yeah.

Branch: And her cooking was just superb. And she was clean. And she was in the business.

Q: And barbershops. Barbershops were very courteous and they accommodated, you know, everybody that you knew of that was African-American?

Branch: That was like a hangout place. Guys who went to get haircuts got to know the barber, the barber got to know you, you developed a relationships with the barber. Then you became friends. And you could come and chat and get a haircut, sit around. Some guys sit around a barbershop all day long. You know, and just have fun. Or sit outside and play checkers. Guys used to sit on the corner where they live in the community play checkers, or they would shoot crap, you know, in the streets, you know. Police would see you. Boy, you'd get up and you'd run and try to get out of the way. The pool room was another place where most blacks, they had pool rooms. That's where I got my start at shooting pool because a lot of pool tables around.

Q: With reference to relatives, do you recall or have you ever, let's say people that were not really your blood relatives, would you call anybody like your cousins or your aunt, anyone here in Newark? Have you adopted any additional family?

Branch: No. I adopted one person as a mother. Because my mother died in 1963. And it was a lady by the name of Wilnolia Holman. I got to know her during the time I served on the Board of Education. She was pretty well up in age, but she was very active. She was a very strong woman. And I always admired her. She was a very attractive, very good looking person. And she was so warm and so courtesy. I don't know what it was about me that she taking a liking to me as an individual. And I used to watch her, and I used to think, I said, here's a lady this age who will

come out at night. You know, fighting for education and issues. And all her kids was grown and they had finished school, and she was dedicated down in other people's children.

Q: To other people.

Branch: And I taken a liking to her. And she lived at 516 Bergen Street, and we got to know each other so well. I said to her, I said, Ms. Holman, I like to adopt you as my mother. And from that day on until she died, she was always. There was nothing too good, nothing that she wanted that I didn't try to give to her to help her with.

Q: Good. Good.

Branch: She was a beautiful person.

Q: Did you live in your community or?

Branch: Yes. She lived at 516 Bergen Street, right in the Central Ward.

Q Great. And she went the distance and proved that she could be your mom.

Branch: And there was another lady by the name of Pernetha Gardner. She lived at 301 Irving Turner Blvd. And Ms. Holman, she lived on Bergen Street. And she was like a mother to me. She was just such a warm, affectionate, beautiful person. She was about eighty-six years, eighty-six years old when she passed. So her whole family, some of them work right here in the City.

Q: Great.

Branch: We became the best of friends.

Q: With reference to birthdays and weddings and funerals, how were they different here in Newark than in the south?

Branch: Well, you got a better, I guess, modern times has changed a lot for the blacks. Now you get more bodies because there's more people are dying. Folks in the south didn't die as fast as they are in the urban city. And I guess it because there are many more peoples in the north than there is in the south. They are spread out. People was more healthy.

Q: And they probably lived a better life style --

Branch: That's right.

Q: -- in the south. A slower pace.

Branch: That's right. Because there wasn't the nightclubs, the places to run and hang. All you did was work during the day, you would go home at night, you would eat supper together with your family, everybody sit at the eating table together. We learned how to say the grace at the table. Everybody had an opportunity to say the grace. And we would have to say our prayers every night before we went to bed thanking the Lord for allowing us to see another day. You know, our mother and father were very strict and that was a discipline. And you learned to fear God.

Q: Great.

Branch: And we was always taught to respect your elderly. Okay? And respect authority, which is the law. You learn all of that. And so I grew up with all those things and never got away from me.

Q: Good. Even today.

Branch: No. That's right.

Q: How about Thanksgiving? How was Thanksgiving celebrated?

Branch: Thanksgiving was a family day for everybody. Sometime we would have the Thanksgiving dinner, and we would invite. My mother would, rather, she would invite the preacher, his wife, and some friends. Or even my mother and father, they would be invited to a friend's house, you know. Or we just did as an individual for Thanksgiving. Had our big turkey, and your ham was a big thing. Turkey and ham, you know, on the table for that day. And we all sit around the table, and we'd have a good Thanksgiving dinner. When that was all over, we'd go out in the yard and play. And chase the hogs and the chickens.

Q: Have a good time.

Branch: Oh yeah. We lived in a house, Pauline, and we were so poor and we were sharecroppers. And the white man didn't never fix our house up. All he wanted us to do was live there like I was a slave. We were so poor and our house was so bad. Pauline, this is ain't no lie. We could look through the floor and see the hogs and the chickens crawling and walking up underneath of the house. And at night sometimes you could look up and see the hogs and see the moon at night.

Q: See the moon and the stars.

Branch: Yeah. At night. And we didn't have the capacity to go up and patch the roof up and stuff like that.

Q: You didn't know how probably, or the materials to do it if you knew it.

Branch: But we managed to do, we managed to get by in those days and time because there was,

economically it was just so much different.

Q: Right. What about alcohol, drugs? Was it prevalent during those days?

Branch: Alcohol was one of the major, one of the biggest industries in the south, besides the cotton. And they made whiskey of all kinds. And they'd brew the whiskey way back up in the woods somewhere where nobody knew where they was at.

Q: This was the illegal, right?

Branch: It was illegal. It was illegal. And they sold it. But if you were caught, you would get locked up. Okay. They didn't have license. They call it bootlegging. You didn't have license to do that. But all the blacks in the south, most of them they made whiskey some kind of way, and they sold it to each other. And it was called white lightning. They didn't know, it wasn't no red lightning, it was white lightning.

Q: White lightning.

Branch: They had no label on it.

Q: What about medicines?

Branch: Medicines, medicine in the south was, the doctors was a little bit further away from the community where you lived. So you would always have to go the doctor if you got sick. If not, from the olden days, they learned how to make medicine from various kinds of roots.

Q: Home remedy.

Branch: Home remedy they call. And if you was, had the whooping cough, they would take the

herb, they would boil it to make a tea. And you would drink it. Carrreostol [?] if you had a bad stomach. They would give you that to relieve you, to clean your stomach out. Yeah.

Q: And it would work?

Branch: It would work. It worked. And then there was certain kind of tea leaves recalling that they were boiling and that you would drink them for certain kinds of. Seems that they know what was, what would help illness that you had in your body.

Q: No matter what it was.

Branch: That's right. They had garlic for certain things.

Q: And garlic is still being used today.

Branch: Yeah. And then they had certain little kind of roots out of the ground that you could chew.

Q: Like the sassafras?

Branch: Yeah.

Q: Have you ever told the terminology of fixix, such as voodoo and whodo?

Branch: We heard about it. We was taught about voodoo. We was taught about all those things that you just mentioned. The question is whether you really believe that it was true or not. And there are some folks that the voodoo, like, lady put something in some snuff. And the lady got worms in her stomach. Okay? Cause this lady want to put this voodoo on her. It was like you're messing with my husband.

Q: All right. So she wanted to.

Branch: She wanted to get even with the lady. There was a number of voodoo things that they used in the old south that was frightening. Like they used to put, always develop something that would always keep the black man frightened. They used to take, white folks used to stand up in the graveyard. White folks never was scared of dead folks. But black folks always scared of dead folks. Most of them in the south. So they would stand up in the graveyard, and like if you was coming from visiting, walking at night, no lights and nothing, and if you saw. I mean, especially you could see by the moonlight getting home, because the moon was very light at night, like the sun, but not as bright as the sun is. And you would go through the path or have to walk past the graveyard. And they would stand up in the graveyard with a white sheet on over their head, like the KuKlux Klan.

Q: To frighten you?

Branch: To frighten you. So you'd be frightened and think there's a ghost.

Q: And it would be actually a white person?

Branch: Yeah. And then run home and come home and tell the kids that they saw a ghost. And you begin to believe that was a ghost because you was raised around your family saying this is a ghost. Not knowing it was a white man who had done this to frighten you.

Q: Yeah, disguising himself.

Branch: And they did a number of things like that to frighten the blacks in the south. They put fear in them.

Q: Juvenile delinquency. Do you recall any bad incidents in your lifetime in Newark?

Branch: Unheard of. Oh, mean in Newark?

Q: In Newark.

Branch: In Newark, yes. Yes. I think things started to change drastically around 1967.

Q: Okay. And where you living at that time?

Branch: In 1967, I was living, when the riot took place, I was living at 350 Belmont Avenue. I was living there with my landlord's daughter. We lived at 216 Plain Street, which is University Avenue at this time. And we moved there, and there was three of us. And we shared the apartment together. And the night of the riot I was leaving the house and all the rigamorole about the riot, the big demonstration that they having at that Seventeenth Avenue Precinct.

Q: Okay.

Branch: And so I made it my business to come on up there to join with all of them to find out what was going on at the time. At that time, they had a young man by the name of Tim Steeling, and Dr. Odom, Oliver Lawfton, and some of the others, we had gathered all the folks who had came to the precinct as a result of the news saying that the cabdriver was tailgating the police officer. And they arrested him and they drug him in like he was some dirt or pig or something. And the folks in the area, the project at that time, where I worked at, right in Hayes Home. And it was in the afternoon. And they all gathered around the precinct because of what was happening. We was tired of em, listening to police brutality on blacks in the community. And the young people got in the news when there was guys like A. Randolph Phillip. Some of the other great, Whitney Young. Not Whitney Young, but, yes it was Whitney Young. And some of the other blacks was talking about jobs and what have you. And what was happening in the urban city. And then began to do something that was going to be a long, hot summer. And that night when all the shit took place, all I could think about that long, hot summer. Because it happened in the

summer months when it was hot. Is that the young people was just fed up, brothers in the community, of police brutality. And all they saw was a black man, like you and I, was being beaten by policeman and drug into the precinct.

Q: Oh my goodness.

Branch: When the news, when the news hit there, when it hit the newspaper, everybody gathered at the precinct, and they was going to bomb the precinct. And so Tim Steel and then, they stood up on a truck along with me, right in the middle of all of that. And the leader was saying that we was tired of police brutality. We was not going to tolerate that.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

Branch: Around the precinct that we was not going to tolerate police brutality. By the time that we started our march, the captain who was white who was in the district, after that long discussion, arguing back and forth that we wasn't going to tolerate, we was going to show that we was intelligent people --

Q: Right.

Branch: -- organizing and demonstrating. The captain sent the policemen out of the precinct with their white helmets on, with their white gloves, and their night stick in their hands. Like if they were coming after the blacks.

Q: The blacks.

Branch: Up on the top of 9 Seventeenth Avenue, the kids up on the top with Molotov cocktails, throwing bricks and everything, waiting to shower down on the white folk when they sent them out of there. When they walked out of there, all I hear them kids say, let's get whitey. And they

started throwing them bottles at the precinct, the cops Me and Tim Steel, now I'm talking, me and Tim Steel had to run down to Boyd Street bar to get out of the street, to keep from getting hit or getting hurt that night. That was the worse nightmare I ever had in my life. You talk about frightened. Because you didn't know where these kids was coming from. You didn't what they had in their hands. Whether they had guns or what they had. And that thing went on and went on, and went on for five days. Every day and every night I was out there with armbands on on my arm. And they eventually gave money to the UCC, Umombo Veroco and them to be leader in the community tried to quiet the people down so they didn't finish burning up the community and the stores and whatever. They was turning over cars on the corner of Springfield Avenue and Morris Avenue. Pulling the whites out of the cars, beating them up. I mean it was awful.

Q: It was terrible.

Branch: It was terrible. No way we control them. One lady lived at 342 West Kenney Street, where I worked in the building. She had eleven kids. And they shot through the roof when they brought the State Troopers in. The second day they brought the State Troopers in. They shot in the, the women was laying on the couch asleep, and the bullet hit her in the back and killed her with eleven kids.

Q: Oh my goodness.

Branch: And that was how frightening it was. Then I had some of my, one or two fighters that I had were caught up in the middle of them. One guy got shot in the neck, in his shoulder and in his side. He was thrown up in the truck for dead. Somehow when they was moving them all, he moved and they noticed that he was not dead.

Q: He was not dead.

Branch: And they were able to take him out and put him in the hospital. But it was a frightening.

It was a frightening experience. People was running down the street. Like West Kenney Street has stores, furniture stores. Franklin Avenue had one of the finest shopping corridors all the way along down, all the way down to South Orange Avenue and Springfield. We had the Savvoy Theater and the Essex Theater right down there across from each other. And the Livery Club was there. Lou Grant's restaurant was there. All the shopping, and shoe stores, the banks was all along Springfield Avenue. They ripped those places up.

Q: They tore em down, right?

Branch: Oh yeah. They were stealing every night. Busting into whiskey stores, running down the street with an armful of whiskey. Some pregnant lady was pulling a carriage and stuff that she had done stole. It was terrible, horrible experience. And then when the State Troopers came in, oh man.

Q: It was even worse?

Branch: That was even worse. Cause peoples didn't give a doggone mind. They was just fed up, you know, and they was trying to help control. And they didn't care who they shot. And it was just horrible that night, one of the most horriblest. And then you go home and you try to go to sleep. And all you could see is that. The next day you expect the same thing.

Q: The nightmare.

Branch: Right. And when they burned up this community, there was no rich, black folks.

Q: All white.

Branch: White folks moved out. Went to the suburbs, went everywhere, where they could be safe there. So you left no economical base here, when you burn up your economical base.

Q: Burn up their own neighborhoods.

Branch: Right. Stores were gone where you shopped there. Drug stores, food stores, your shoe stores, you know, the banks. They bombed out the banks, some of them. You know, Foodtown, one that went up a lot on the corner of Morris Avenue and Springfield Avenue. I mean, it was horrible. So, you know, we lived through the experience. But eventually when it calmed down, you had to get back to normal. They even put signs up on various restaurants and barbershops. Sold store. Everybody know what sold was.

Q: Okay. And that was S O L D or S O U L.

Branch: S O L D. Sold.

Q: So they were no longer there anymore.

Branch: Yeah. So they gone. So when they went, your businesses went.

Q: That's right. Was your home, where your family lived, was it affected? You know.

Branch: No. Because we were renters. We lived in a big, old apartment building right down on I lived in a big apartment house down at 350 Belmont Avenue and Easter Place. All in the area where you see over there now, all houses, all built up in that whole entire area. All that area's gone.

Q: Completely.

Branch: Oh yeah. We got all townhouses. They got townhouses in there and plus they got all the high rise, you know, that whole area. That was the Mom and Pop stores, that was the whiskey stores, restaurants, that was the pool room and liquor stores where all that was at. Like Somerset

Street down there And Somerset and Montgomery. All that whole entire area. There is no more West Street where it used to be. There is no Barker Street. There is no more Clayton Street.

Q: It's all gone.

Branch: Bone Street, all that just about gone.

Q: To pause for a moment, what was your first job when you came to Newark?

Branch: My first job when I came to Newark. Just walking the street.

Q: You didn't have.

Branch: Really, I didn't have no job. I was too young. So what I end up doing is working in the wood yard. I believe in having your own money. I worked on the coal truck, the vegetable wagon, when we had Jake Green in the City of Newark. Guy used to rent the wagons and stuff, and we used to work on, going around selling vegetables and fruits, you name it. Watermelon.

Q: And they would pay you every week?

Branch: Well, you worked on it and when you sold, you made a profit, you know, from doing that. But when you worked in the wood yard, you got, for every basket that you sold you like got twenty-five cents a basket.

Q: And that was good money?

Branch: That was good money in those days. And what did I know about big dollars.

Q: How old were you then?

Branch: Oh about twelve, thirteen years old.

Q: So you had your own money?

Branch: Yeah. I had my own money. I would say about fourteen, fifteen, something like that when I was doing that. And I worked on the ice truck carrying ice. I used to carry wood up six, seven, eight floors, you know, on my back. And I be honest with you, I used to steal a little bit for myself. I overpacked the basket and make me another basket for myself.

Q: Make you some money on the side.

Branch: The man we got, all he wanted is collect his money for his basket. And he paid me to do that.

Q: So you were honestly taking?

Branch: Yeah. So I learned. I used to start, I shined shoes what have you on Saturdays and Sundays was the day that people used to get dressed up and get their shoes shined, you know.

Q: And you were there to accommodate.

Branch: That's right. I used to buy my clothes all from the rummage sale store.

Q: You're kidding.

Branch: Yeah, right there on West Kenney Street where Reverend Simmons' church is. They had a Chinese restaurant, I mean, they had a Chinese auction place there. You'd do in and you'd buy all your clothes and stuff. It was all clean You pick up what you want. I was a clean, good black guy in town

Q: You were dressed to kill.

Branch: Yeah. And then I started to work in the laundry after all the wood and stuff that I used to sell, make a living. Finally went to work for sixty-five cents an hour. The first laundry that I worked in was the R Street, down on R Street. Called the, not the Lakawana, but the Ironbound Laundry.

Q: Okay.

Branch: Right down where the university all built up in that whole area. That's one of my first jobs. And then I left from there and worked at the Lakawana Laundry on High Street, which is now Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. Near Local Avenue. Then the next laundry I worked in was the laundry on South Bevins and Woodland Avenue, was the other Lakawana Laundry. Always worked in laundries for it was a living, you know.

Q: What was the most common jobs for African-Americans back in those days?

Branch: Well, laundry work and guys working on the garbage truck, picking up the garbage. Sweeping the streets. You know, those were the most common jobs.

Q: Do you have any photos or news clippings back from, you know, like say when you first came to Newark?

Branch: No. Because there wasn't nothing that I actually was involved that gave me the name and the name recognition, as such. My work actually began in 1951. I may have some clippings if I can find them when I started boxing. I started boxing in 1945.

Q: Okay. Now were you a professional boxer?

Branch: Not at that time. I was an amateur first.

Q: Okay.

Branch: And I fought for six years. I fought amateur. I had nine amateur fights. I got to beat Golden Glove champs and never fought in the Golden Glove.

Q: Okay. Who were some of the people that you fought?

Branch: Oh, Richard Kenny, Jessup, Butler. Guys who became household names. John Darvey, who is now, we serve on the Lean 25 and the New Jersey Boxing Hall of Fame group. So some of those guys are still alive. Some of them are dead.

Q: Okay.

Branch: Some of the great guys that I used to box with in the gym were guys like Charlie Ray Williams, Al Mobley, Frank Carson, Bennie Dean, Bennie Williams, Perry Lowe. Oh a whole bunch of great, good fighters in those days and time. Not boxing, but they was professional for me. Cause I was an amateur. The last day in the gym I learned the art of self-defense in boxing. And then when I retired in 1951, I started training young kids. Since 1951. The next thing you knew I was taking them all over. All over. To the Golden Gloves. Various tournaments developing a fighter, fighters. And I developed the Featherweight of the World. One kid I had by the name of Lloyd Marshall became the Featherweight of the World. Took him to Germany in 1967, he knocked out the third Lightweight of the World in nine rounds, after losing for nine rounds.

Q: You're kidding.

Branch: Yeah. I mean, guys like Eddie Dixon I trained. A little white I worked with Ruben

Carter, the boy named, and he's still in jail and got lifetime. His name was James, be his last name. I trained so many fighters. I turned out more than 275 national Golden Gloves and State Champs in my lifetime.

Q: Great. Great. So you have a great history in Newark. What church do you belong to?

Branch: Belong to St. James since 1947.

Q: Okay, and who's the pastor there?

Branch: The pastor there now is Reverend Keith Whatley.

Q: Okay. Who was the pastor before him? You have any idea?

Branch: The pastor before him was Reverend Burr. And before Reverend Burr, was Dr. Odom.

Q: In what capacity do you serve there other than being a member?

Branch: I am a trustee of the church. I was elected twice. One time I lost and I was elected again. I never looked for just to do anything but just go to church. I didn't want to take an active part because I know when you take an active part, because I know when you take active part, all I know is that they work the devil out you.

Q: And being that you are city councilperson here in the City of Newark, it would probably take away from your time from being here. Why don't you elaborate a little bit about your first time running for political office? Was it for City Council or some other capacity?

Branch: Pauline, good question. I tell you the truth. I never liked politics. To be honest with you. As a younger man, I used to hear from so many people how people used their position as a

politician to manipulate people, to get all they could out of them, and then they was not accountable to the folks. And I took an exception to that because I felt that you shouldn't serve if you couldn't be there for the people when they needed you. And that was very important to me. So I never liked it. So because of the, being involved in the boxing world and working for the Housing Authority, which I started in 1962, I finally moved into the family and community service because I worked there a cleaning man. I cleaned the building, maintenance man. I had to clean the building what have, and keep the groups clean, and kept my building tip top shape.

Then when I was transferred into Family and Community Service, I leave the Housing Authority, I got involved with the youth, developed a youth program. That's going back to 62. The prime event. I was involved in the boxing world because I got a household name starting out, you know, name Buddygew. They always called me Buddygew. So I got involved in the training kids and preparing them. So I got to know their family and people got to read about the kids and the club. So kids would always flock to me because the name Buddygew, you know. And I had fighters and then I got to know them. And then when I got transferred into Family and Community Service, I started developing programs of all kinds for the redevelopment of the Housing Authority.

I developed a number of programs. One that I was very excited about it was in this Housing Authority. Kids who lived and young ladies who lived in public housing. The program was structured to give some incentives to young ladies. Like Miss America. And from fourteen to eighteen years of age, I ran it a number of years for the Family and Community Service. And then I used my all the boxing skills some of mine out in the playground in public housing. Thomas Home was one. Stella Wright and Hadey. I would move them around. Then Dr. Tim Steel, he asked me to go to West Kenney and speak to Mr. Tractenberg about having a boxing show at the school. I went and I met Mr. Tractenberg, the principal of the school. And me and him we walked down, and he said well you all want to have a boxing show, well, what would you use the money for. I don't know. I didn't know what I would use the money. He say, well, why don't you use it for a scholarship. And this came from Mr. Tractenberg. Before I could get back to Tim Steel the next day, cause he had revived the Dukas AC, and I had the Park Branch Boxing Club, me and Tommy Parks. And those are two rival clubs for the attraction for drawing folks to

come. And before I could back to Tim, Tim had done called Mr. Tracternberg and all that originated from that conversation, and I became Tim Steel's legman.

Q: Oh great.

Branch: So I gained a lot of recognition by promoting them shows cause all that they saw was George Branch. And then I raised, when Tim died in 1967, he died, and he only got a chance to see one of the boxing shows that he was a part of, having the structure set up. Well, the whole board of directors. And I ran that boxing show for about eighteen years. I raised over, close to a hundred thousand dollars in those days and times.

Q: Oh, that was a lot of money.

Branch: Contributions and donations and what we collected at the door. Over one hundred kids received scholarships from the West Kenney Scholarship Fund in that length of time. And every one of those kids finished school as far as I know. Some of them were back in Newark. Alex Barnett is one of them. She's director for the Health and Welfare Department right now.

Q: Right.

Branch: I've got a whole bunch of kids that done well. Now the boxing show did not give a full scholarship, but it gave them a start.

Q: Gave them a jump start.

Branch: That's right. And they took advantage of it. I don't know one that dropped out of school. So I developed that program. And then I had another going in the summer months for entertainment for the folks. I would go out and raise the money. I used to run the Central Athletic Association Basketball Tournament. I had professional guys that was doing all this here. And I

would go out and raise the money. Pay the officials, buy their trophies.

Q: The whole bit.

Branch: And then I created all kinds of programs for the senior citizen. I used to have the Thanksgiving luncheon for them. I would go out and raise the money. I would have them the cooking. We would bring it over to the neighborhood house and serve. I would bring in all the big folks who made contributions. Bill Blakeley, Cole Lewis. I made them all a part of what I was doing cause I wanted them to see it.

Q: Right.

Branch: Then I created the fashion extravaganza since I've been on the Council.

Q: You mean down at the PSE&G Building.

Branch: Yeah. But let me get back to the first part, why I got involved in politics. I had developed my household name. Then I didn't like, really like politics that much. And was a guy because I had the name recognition, his name Ray Burgess. He came to me, and he was slick, slick as an onion. He came to me, he said, councilman, he said, why don't you run? He said, you got name recognition, everybody knows you. Why don't you run? I said, Ray, I'm not interested in that stuff. He said, you should run. He says, and I'll be your campaign manager. I help you raise the money, what have you. And I like a old fool, I trusted that boy. Come to find out he was using me to raise money, at that time it was good no days and times. He was packing in money. I ran third in the race and lost. That was in 1974.

Q: Oh my God.

Branch: And I quit when I lost. I didn't bother about suing him. I just kept on doing what I was

doing. I kept on creating programs, you know, for the community, for seniors, and everybody. And then in 1974, Ken Gibson in 75, he appointed me to the Board of Education as a community person, who had done so much in the community. And I thought that was one of the greatest honors that anybody could bestow upon.

Q: Sure.

Branch: A mayor would think enough of you, of all the people, to seek you out as an individual, to appoint you to the Board of Education which was a very important position.

Q: It's a high job.

Branch: And I honored that position, and always honor him and respect him for that. And I tried to live up to that expectation of that appointment to the Board. I didn't try to embarrass him. I thought it was great for him to do that. So and then I developed more programs when I got on the Board. I had Ph.D.s sitting up there and all that, and I didn't have none of that stuff. But I had some common sense and I did have a formal education. And, Pauline, after I created, I brought in the project pride. Budget probably one of the biggest one.

Then after a couple of years I got Jerry Eisenberg involved. Old Jerry Eisenberg but never George Branch now. But that's okay. The important thing was we keep the doggone thing going.

Q: That's right.

Branch: We have raised over, now over a hundred, close to a hundred and seventy, one million eight hundred thousand dollars in seventeen years.

Q: For scholarships.

Branch: For scholarships. All went to public housing kids. Every year we give away thirty or forty scholarships to kids that comes out of the City of Newark. So that was another big one. So, in 82, I decided after talking to different ones. I spoke to the mayor. I spoke to a whole bunch of folks that was influential people in the community. I found out that nobody was supporting anybody against anybody. And then I decided, I said, well, let me see can I get a manager. I talked to the union leader, guy named James Benjamin. James Benjamin was, and because of my relationship between Earl Hyde and James Benjamin and the mayor of the city. And Earl Hyde was running against Ken, and James Benjamin knew that me and Ken were good friends. He didn't want me to create no problem between Earl Hyde and who was who. So when I spoke to Ben, he said, well, I don't know. I have to think about that. And then a few days later we got back together. He said, well, I'll support you. I had a campaign manager and everything. And we give somebody to work with and we'll work with you.

Q: Okay.

Branch: In 82 I decided to do it. And what happened is that I made myself clear to James Benjamin. The mayor got a win for himself. George Branch got a win for himself. When win, I got to be able to work with whoever. So I'm not developing no animosity toward anybody. All I want to do is win. I don't care who support who as long as I win. That was my philosophy. So I won in 1982. I ran, went into a run-off. And I won the run-off.

Q: Good.

Branch: I was the first person, the first black in the City of Newark to ever be re-elected since Irving Turner.

Q: Great. Speaking of Irving Turner, he was the first black elected official for the Council.

Branch: Yes.

Q: Oh great.

Branch: First one in the Central Ward.

Q: In the Central Ward.

Branch: Yeah. He's the first one. And so I was in the run-off in that election. The second time I ran, I went into another run-off. I won that. The last two times, the third time I was in a run-off. I believe it was a run-off. But the fourth time I ran, I won on the first ballot. And so that would be sixteen years in 1998, I would have served sixteen years. Then when I got on the Council, I created more programs. Had fashion show for seniors. I created the Fashion Extravaganza. I created programs for kids where they would write essays in the school if they was a mayor or councilperson what they would do to run the City. Then I make them council members for a whole day.

Q: A part of what's happening.

Branch: Yeah. And, oh, I can just talk of all the things I've done. I mean, you know, there's just been so many, you know.

Q: And as city councilperson I'm pretty sure that you have a lot of material. Photos and things you could probably share in helping the Scott-Krueger in housing their materials. Make it more interesting. With reference to Scott-Krueger, what can you tell me about Scott-Krueger?

Branch: Well, when I came to Newark, the most famous name that I heard in our community was Renee Starks who right across from Scott Mansion as a black entrepreneur. Miss Louise Scott, who was the owner of the Scott Mansion at that time. The other famous name that fashion designer was, and I was thinking of her name this morning.

Q: Emily Miles.

Branch: Emily Miles. Those were three names of black women that stood out in this community. And I was a young man at that time, and used to pass the Scott Mansion all the time. And it was like a beacon light on the hill. That's all we called it, beacon light on a hill. This man's gonna be a greater beacon light on the hill.

Q: Okay. Did you ever go in?

Branch: We used to go in there, we used to go in there for the radio shows at Miss Bernice.

Q: Basch.

Branch: Bernice Basch used to have that. We always invited to come and sit and listen to the various one that she would invite to raise questions on political issues, you name it, what have you. And Bernice was tough.

Q: She was a radio personality.

Branch: Yes she was. And everybody listened on Sunday night to hear Bernice Basch.

Q: Okay. What year are we talking about?

Branch: We're going back now, back in the 50s.

Q: And she was on what radio station?

Branch: WNJR.

Q: Midnight or?

Branch: Nine o'clock.

Q: Nine o'clock at night.

Branch: At night.

Q: Sunday night.

Branch: Sunday night.

Q: Bringing the news of the community.

Branch: Yeah, she called her program News and Views. Bernice Basch I think that was it. And we used to go to Miss Scott's place. I had a chance to meet her a couple of times. And she was a very, very fine individual person.

Q: Okay. Who made a difference in the community I imagine.

Branch: Oh sure. And everybody looked up to those names. Cause they were names recognized. Particularly a mansion owned by a black woman. And that's how I got to know who Miss Scott was by the name of the building. Scott's Mansion. Cause it was named after her. And she had money in those days and times. She probably was the first black millionaire, second black millionaire.

Q: Entrepreneur in the City of Newark.

Branch: In the City of Newark. So she became a household name.

Q: And what did she actually do in this mansion? What was her job?

Branch: Well, she was the owner of the property. And she would rent it out for various kinds of things. You could have a number of things in that place. That was like her home. Had all kinds of shows there.

Q: Fashion shows.

Branch: You hair, you get your hair done. It was a name. Right on that corner there.

Q: What about the Kruegers?

Branch: The Kruegers, I don't know much about them. Other than these Jews own this place. That was their mansion. And they used to, from what I read and what I was told, that they would. At the top of the hill you had Krueger Beer Brewery, West Kenney and Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. Coming down Springfield Avenue was a [?] that was underneath of the ground. Raymond Blvd. was another one. Where they used to ship the beer, bootlegging beer underneath the various areas.

Q: It was like an underground railroad for beer for the Kruegers.

Branch: And they was the owner. They was the owner.

Q: Were you able, do you know of any blacks that worked for the Kruegers?

Branch: No.

Q: No blacks.

Branch: I don't know any of the blacks. Because in those days and times, you know, when you're young, you don't even look at names. Only when you grow up and hear a name of various one at different political affairs or different functions. Christmas parties or weddings or something like that, you get a chance to. But didn't know them on a personal basis. Never met either one of them. And when they sold out, they moved out west someplace away from Newark.

Q: Far removed from Newark. In summarizing your life in Newark, sort of give me a brief synopsis on how you view Newark in general. Has it been a place that you have enjoyed to live? Which is the good side. And give me the bad side in summarizing this interview for today.

Branch: Well, the good side, the good side, I am pleased to have had to live in Newark and to see the good and the bad. It's been very rewarding.

Q: On the good side.

Branch: On the good side. For all the things I have done, the contact I have made, the people that I have served. Seeing all the good things that once was there, but is not there now, but also they're coming back. That's a very rewarding experience. When I look at the Central Ward, when I took office in 1983 there was not one development that was taking place in the ward.

Q: Now it's growing up.

Branch: Now, today, I can look back and see all these things happened in the ward. For low income houses for folks. Bringing back recreation that we once had. Bringing back the supermarkets that we once had. Bringing back the roller skating ring that we had. The bowling alleys that we had is on the drawing board, that's coming back. We had five [?] in the Central Ward, today we got six. That's on the way back. And Society Hill over here. Those are the good and positive things. Okay. On the down side, we lost companies like General Electric, Western Electric. We lost a lot of the--

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: This is Pauline Blunt. Good morning and happy birthday. So with reference to, why don't you just give me a little of the seamy side of Newark in summarizing this interview, Councilman Branch.

Branch: Well, the I guess the bad side of Newark, on a constructive basis, is that after the riots of 1967, our community, and particularly in the Central Ward, went up in smoke. Left us economically not stable any longer because the businesses left the City of Newark. We lost all of the jobs. Our community started to deteriorate. There was not enough resources to revitalize the community in which we live now which is in the Central Ward. It's been very tough in trying to rebuild the Central Ward economically. And even politically. To become stable where we could find jobs as we used to. All those things that I mentioned to you in the early part of my statement. We used to learn how to hustle, jobs was shining shoes, working on the vegetable wagon, carrying coal. Those things are obsolete, they obsolete today, and they're no longer in existence. Where you could walk into a restaurant or even a barbershop and sweep the floor or shine shoes. Or got a restaurant and wash dishes. Or work in the laundry. Or go along Springfield Avenue and get a little job working in the vegetable store or working in the shoe store. Or working in the pool room, cleaning up the pool room after it was dirty. Those things don't exist any longer here in the Central Ward economically. And that's the bad part.

And not only that. The crime in our City has helped deteriorate the City.

Q: Has deteriorated it.

Branch: Has deteriorated it. Crime has caused a lot of folks to move out of the City. And trying and rebuild back to the way it once was is a long drawn out process. And as we build, we probably helping reduce a lot the crime ridden areas and people can feel a little much more safer. They don't feel safe any longer. I live in three kinds of fear, and that's the bad part. I live in three kinds of fear. In spite of all that we have done to revitalize the ward. I live in three kinds of fear.

The three fears that I live in now. I fear while I sleep at night is my car going to be there in the morning when I get up. Are the windows not broken out in my wife's car. The second one is that while I am working I fear whether my house going to be broken in. My wife and I, we work hard to have a decent place to sustain and live, entertain friends and what have you. We struggle and sacrifice to make our home comfortable for others and more for ourselves because that's where we live. And the third fear that I have is that I fear for my wife coming home.

Q: That she'll be attacked or?

Branch: That she'll be attacked. Is she going to get in the house safe. And then I have to have the same fear myself when I come home. Because you can never tell when somebody's sitting and waiting for you. Because when you have a little name recognition what have you, people try, people will prey on that. They think that you got a fortune. You got nothing but some bills, you know, and trying to make ends meet. And then they will steal your car. Car jacking. Drugs has now forced the community. They hang on every corner. They don't do nothing but prey on you. They watch when you leave home, when you come home, the timing. And not enough policemen to be on every corner to see what exactly is going on. That is the downside of our community. Is that we have to work and sleep and walk in fear today. In spite of the many good things that's taken place in the Central Ward.

And I would like to close by saying, Pauline, I owe a great deal of thanks to the mayor and the council people who supported everything that has taken place in that Central Ward. It's not anything that I done by myself. Five votes have been there for practically for everything that has been proposed for the Central Ward that I asked for.

The other thing is that trying to get enough housing rebuilt in the Central Ward for low income people. And as you know, the Republicans took over. They wiped out our section 8 because all kinds of social programs and what have you. So all those things have affected our community in terms of trying to build back up. The Housing Authority has done a fantastic job in building low income housing.

So I guess in my summaries that I can look at both sides. There's good. There's bad. But

I think there are more bad things than there are good things.

Q: So if you had your life to live over again, would you still come to Newark and knowing what you've known in your life?

Branch: Pauline, I have enjoyed life so much in everything I have done. I would live the same life. I don't have anything in my life right now I can regret. I don't have no habits that I cannot control.

Q: And Newark would be the place that you would?

Branch: Well, I wouldn't say Newark would be the place. But I grew up in Newark, and I saw both sides. But I was here for the good and I was here for the bad. You follow me.

Q: And the good outweigh the bad.

Branch: That's okay. And then I developed so many relationships. If I go someplace else, I got to start all over again. And at my age, I don't feel like starting all over again. If I was a younger man.

Q: You would tackle.

Branch: I started leaving Newark several times. When I was thinking about becoming an elected official. But the folks elected me and I try to be a good councilman for the folks. I try to be accessible, I try to be accountable, I try to make sure that I respond. Whether I can help them at the minute that they talking about. But I try to do all that. Because I felt that if they thought enough of me to vote for me, then I should think of enough of them to be there when they need it.

Q: Be supportive.

Branch: That's right. So I had a very rewarding life. I married a very, very, very wonderful and very beautiful lady. That has been my whole life because I married somebody that cared about me. Someone who really wanted something out of life. Someone who had the initiative to go forth and encourage me, you know. My wife don't have anything to worry about when it comes to me.

Q: So it's partnership. Not only in marriage, but in the political arena.

Branch: Right. And I was lucky and I had to always thank God for her. Every night I thank God for my wife. Because she is, she's compatible. We enjoy doing things together. We enjoy it. George, let's go someplace. It suits me cause I done been halfway around the doggone world. Managing travel fighters. When I was on the board, I traveled. But I traveled because I learn things. And I try to bring back reports and write up every conference I attend. I write reports. Because I want to be accountable. And I want folks to know when you attend. I don't need to go just to be going, Pauline.

Q: You go to bring some knowledge back to the community.

Branch: Right. And I put in my reports to my council colleagues, you know, is that here's something that we may take a look at. This is what is working in the other cities. In the meantime you get hung up when an administration downstairs won't support it, or your council support it. I was very apprehensive about writing reports. Wrote em when I was on the Board of Education. I wrote em when I was working for the Housing Authority. And I was very apprehensive about doing that. And one of my reasons I never knew whether those guys wrote reports or not. And if I come on the Council, I'm the only one that's writing reports.

Q: That's right. And so you would start a new trend that maybe wouldn't be comfortable. Well, you know, this interview has been most gratifying. And I'm pretty sure that the information that we have gathered here today is being used in the proper manner. So Councilman George

Branch I thank you for a marvelous interview.

Branch: Well, I thank you for asking me, number one. Cause I was thinking about one day I should write a book.

Q: It's never too late.

Branch: I know. And this has really. Because that's what you need, someone to pull things out of you. One of the most difficult things is for you to sit down and write something about yourself. Writing a book, if you don't have the experience. Because things that you would ask me, never would come to mind. Like you went back and you started saying, where was you born at? What was your life like in the south?

Q: Refreshes the memory.

Branch: Refresh the memory.

Q: And bring out those hidden agendas.

Branch: So I hope when you do that, I would like for you to save me a copy of that because I was thinking about doing that. This will give me an excellent start.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW